American Patriotism and A World Attitude

An Address

by

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at the Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Society of the Sons of the Revolution

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The question is frequently asked me how a patriotic American, who believes in the origins of his country, can today support a policy of international cooperation. If we take seriously the admonitions of the founders of this country, should not present-day America attempt to live unto itself? Such is the question I shall attempt to answer this evening.

The Farewell Address

There are two quotations which are usually invoked in support of the doctrine of isolation. The first is from President Washington's Farewell Address of 1796. In this address Washington declared, "Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none or a very remote relation. Hence, she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities." Likewise in June, 1823, Jefferson wrote, "I have ever deemed it fundamental for the United States never to take an active part in the quarrels of Europe. Their political interests are entirely distinct from ours. Their mutual jealousies, their balance of power, their complicated alliances, their forms and principles of government, are all foreign to us. They are nations of eternal war. . . . On our part, never had a people so favorable a chance of trying the opposite system, of peace and fraternity with mankind, and the direction of all our means and faculties to the purpose of improvement instead of destruction."

No historian questions the wisdom of the policy embodied in these statements for the period in which they were enunciated. The United States was a struggling republic which had just won its independence from Great Britain. Its territory was still circumscribed by the Mississippi river,

and surrounded by vast areas held by Spain and England. Europe at that time represented a system which was hostile to the ideas of liberty and representative government for which the American republic stood. A policy of injecting our influence into the political quarrels of the European dynastic system would not have advanced American principles, nor served any national interest of the United States. On the contrary, such a policy might even have led to the extinction of our independence.

At the same time we should not forget that even in this period the United States had reason to be grateful to the outside world. It is true that many inhabitants of the thirteen American colonies made valiant sacrifices for the principle of independence. But if one is to respect historical truth it must be admitted that it is improbable that these colonies would have been able single-handed to establish and maintain their independence against Great Britain. Historians seem agreed that this independence could not have been won except for the military and financial aid furnished by France under the alliance of 1778. In bringing our republic into existence, therefore, the fathers of this country admitted that at times a policy of cooperation with foreign nations was advantageous to us.

Liberty as a World Concept

The fact that we were willing to take assistance from European powers in fighting our battles against England is relatively unimportant in comparison with two other considerations which I wish to stress. The first is that the men who founded the American nation were not interested in the American people alone. They earnestly believed that they were establishing a system of government and a way of life which would benefit the people of the world as a whole. This is evident, I think, from the wording of the Declaration of Independence itself. This Declaration did not say that all Americans are born free and equal; but all *men*. It laid down the broad principle that government derived its just powers from the consent of the governed. These ideas had not been created by an American; they had come first from an Englishman, John Locke. They were ideas which the English Whigs had unsuccessfully attempted to impose upon King George III. Although the Whigs temporarily failed, the American revolutionists succeeded. The surrender of Cornwallis was a death blow to personal rule, not only in America but in England. The American revolutionists fought and won a battle for British liberalism. The world-significance of the American revolution was clearly indicated in an address made in this city in Independence Hall by Abraham Lincoln, on February 22, 1861. In this address, Lincoln declared: "It was not the mere matter of separation of the colonies from the motherland, but that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but hope to all the world, for all future

time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights would be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance." In short, at the very beginning of our history, the United States was motivated not only by national interests, but by a desire to see certain ideas of tolerance, liberty, and representative government prevail throughout the world. If any further proof is necessary may I read to you this excerpt from a little-known letter written by General George Washington in September, 1785 to the Marquis de Chastellux: "It gives me great pleasure," the General wrote, "to find by my last letters from France, that the dark clouds which overspread your hemisphere are yielding to the sunshine of peace. My first wish is to see the blessings of it diffused through all countries and among all ranks of every country, and that we should consider ourselves as children of a common parent, and be disposed to acts of brotherly kindness towards one another."

During the Revolutionary War, Timothy Dwight wrote a famous national song, which expressed the same ideal, as follows:

> "Columbia, Columbia, to glory arise,
> The queen of the world and the child of the skies.
> Thy heroes the rights of mankind shall defend
> And triumphs pursue them, and glory attend.
> While the ensigns of union in triumph unfurled
> Hush the tumult of war and give peace to the world."

Thomas Jefferson, perhaps to a greater extent than any of his contemporaries, looked beyond the horizon of nationality to the whole future of mankind. As Henry Adams has pointed out in his history of the period, Jefferson did not wish to see the United States build up a new nationality merely to create new armies and navies and to engage in the barren rivalries for territory which had dominated the policies of European states for years, and which had reduced the Old World to a veritable hell. He wished to see the United States assist in bringing into existence a new era in which eternal peace would rule supreme. "Peace is our Passion," Jefferson wrote in 1803.

Dictatorship No Longer a European System

The second consideration which I wish to emphasize is that while a policy of isolation was necessary to establish the American republic in an unfriendly world, new times have arisen which call for new methods in advancing American interests and principles. In 1789, Europe was governed by Legitimist monarchies who had no sympathies for the American experiment. In the Holy Alliance of 1815 the leading Governments of Europe pledged themselves in favor of the principle of legitimacy, which was the antithesis of representative government. Today, however, the

situation in Europe, as well as in the Americas, has radically changed. In the French revolution of 1789, in the movement of 1848, in the fundamental changes which gradually took place in the government of England during the 19th century, and the equally vast changes which took place during and as a result of the world war, the old dynastic system came down with a crash. During that war, the Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian monarchies were overthrown. For a time it looked as if democracy was to have a re-birth throughout the world, and the ideals for which the American revolution was fought would be universally expanded. Unfortunately, however, democracy has been steadily losing ground, largely because of the persistence of the deadly enemy of democracy, namely, the institution of war, and a chaotic international economic system. As a result of the suffering produced by that system, democracy has been giving way. The old Legitimist monarchies have been replaced by a new type of dictatorship, represented in part by Communism, Fascism and Hitlerism. The new dictatorships which challenge the American system are not confined to Europe; they extend to South America, and the Orient. Even in the United States voices have appeared to assert that dictatorship is the only solution for our difficulties. In 1789 the young American republic stood alone in a friendless world. Today the American system is again on the defensive with this difference; now the banner of democracy is supported also by two other great nations, namely England and France. If the American people desire to remain faithful to the cosmopolitan ideals of their fathers, if they wish to see these ideals restored throughout the world, they must stand hand in hand with the British and French democracies in a genuine effort to organize the world against war, and to overturn the frightful international chaos, which has bred dictatorship in so many countries. International cooperation today, having this object, does not mean reversion to the entangling alliances against which Washington and Jefferson warned. It means an enlightened effort toward the reorganization of the world so as to provide the technological foundation necessary if a truly representative government is to exist in every advanced country.

Why Democracy Is Still Valid

In many quarters today it is fashionable to state that the principles embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights were never more than platitudes, and the men who first uttered these principles were insincere. These same critics also assert, with an unconscious inconsistency, that a democratic form of government cannot hope to cope with over-powering problems of the modern age. To these critics, government in the future must consist of a meaningless struggle between ingrowing groups, in which victory will go to those who are the most ruthless in using force. These gloomy pessimists declare that all hope of finding a rational solution for our problems through appealing to the intelligence

of the electorate must fail; and that faith in education as a solvent for our difficulties must be abandoned. Now I am the last one to say that we can solve the international or the domestic problems of the present age merely by an appeal to tradition. I am sure that the old unlicensed *laissez-faire* conception of liberty and individualism must give way to forms of cooperation having the welfare of the community as its goal. Nevertheless, I am conservative enough to assert that the American ideals enunciated at the foundation of our country, should not be scrapped just because they have not been fully realized. I am convinced that human intelligence can and should serve as the basis of society; that each individual should be given an opportunity to develop his personality and to think his own thoughts; and that racial and religious minorities should be tolerated. But if we really believe in these ideas we must bend every effort to correct the deformities of the present world situation, so that these ideas may finally emerge triumphant.

America as Part of a World Economic System

The reason why the maintenance of the welfare and the traditions of the American people depends today upon the principle of international cooperation lies largely in the fact that the interests of the American people and the position of the United States have greatly changed during the last 150 years. Originally this country was self-contained. For a time we had a merchant marine, which developed an important clipper trade; but for the most part our people could make a living by developing vast internal resources. In order to aid this development, we borrowed money from Europe, and we met the interest on this money by exporting more goods than we imported. Fundamentally, however, the United States down until 1914 was self-sufficient. Its foreign trade and its foreign investments were relatively unimportant.

As a result of the World War a great change in the economic and financial position of the United States occurred. Europe became dependent upon us for food and munitions. Since the Allies could not pay for these materials in cash, they borrowed money. By 1919 the United States had paid off its debts to Europe, and had become a creditor nation to the extent of nearly eighteen billion dollars—a figure which included inter-governmental loans as well as private investments. Exhausted by the World War, Europe continued to draw upon the resources of the United States. Foreign investment and foreign trade both increased. Although in 1890 the exports of the United States were only $858,000,000, by 1929 they were $5,241,000,000. During the same period the imports of the United States increased from $789,000,000 to $4,399,000,000. Unfortunately the United States at the end of the World War did not readjust its tariff policy so as to make it possible for Europe to repay its enormous debt. Never-

theless, as a result of its foreign investment policy, the United States was able to develop a huge export trade without receiving equivalent imports in return. But when these foreign investments stopped in 1929, a crash occurred. During the last three years American exports have declined 70 per cent in comparison with a decline in our industrial production of only 45 per cent. Obviously this tremendous decline has been reflected in unemployment.

Isolation Means Lowered Standard of Living

Dismayed at the havoc wrought in international trade during the last few years, a number of Americans today assert that the United States should revert to the policy of economic isolation, which dominated the early years of the United States. Undoubtedly, many mistakes have been made in recent years by the commercial policy of the United States; but it is the path of wisdom to correct these mistakes, in favor of a policy of genuine international cooperation, instead of making new and equally serious mistakes inherent in a policy of isolation. It is of course theoretically possible for the United States to become a hermit nation and to stop all export and import trade. The state of Pennsylvania, I imagine, could similarly exist without the trade of the rest of the Union. But to become isolated in this fashion, means a definite lowering of the standard of living. It means abandoning the material basis of our civilization and returning to a bare subsistence level. It is true that less than 10 per cent of the total production in this country is sold to foreign nations. But any business man knows that in a free market it is this 10 per cent which fixes the price for the whole product. Moreover, many important industries are vitally dependent upon foreign trade. Half of our cotton, more than a third of our tobacco, about 30 per cent of our kerosene, and nearly one-fifth of our wheat is marketed abroad. Likewise 23 per cent of our agricultural machinery, 50 per cent of our motorcycles, and 41 per cent of our typewriters enter the export trade. Even in 1932, in the midst of the depression, the Department of Commerce reported that there were 2,000,000 workers directly engaged in producing export goods and that 1,250,000 workers were employed in supplying the needs of these export industries. From the standpoint of imports, the American economic system is just as vitally dependent upon foreign trade, as exports. All of the rubber, silk, bananas, tea, coffee, and cocoa used by the American people must be imported, together with half of our sugar, three-fourths of the furs and skins, and more than half the newsprint. Some of our most vital industrial products, such as nickel, iodine, radium, antimony and cobalt must be imported. The more developed an industrial civilization becomes, the more it is dependent upon materials from every corner in the globe. In the manufacture of a telephone receiver eighteen or twenty commodities from nearly as many countries are necessary. A policy of complete economic isolation, such as is

advocated in some quarters today, would mean that probably 3,000,000 more men would be thrown out of work, and that the comfort of the American people would be still further reduced. It is an ironic commentary that the newspaper chain which recently started the Buy American movements, obtains its newsprint from a foreign source—namely, Canada! Economic isolation would mean the loss of our foreign investments, both government and private. It would mean that American industry could not take advantage of the needs of peoples in distant areas for industrial goods —a need which will be supplied as soon as these people acquire the necessary purchasing power.

This evening I shall not attempt to discuss the intricacies of the gold standard, nor explain why the United States must always be interested in the financial situation of other countries. I do wish to insist, however, upon the psychological fact that in an era when the radio, airplane, and wireless telephone has brought one continent within speaking distance of another, the business men of the United States will not acquire the "confidence" necessary for the resumption of the wheels of industry in this country, so long as the rest of the world hovers over the edge of a precipice.

The Dangers of Cultural Nationalism

The question whether present-day America should attempt to live alone is more of a philosophical problem than an economic problem. There is nothing in the history of American ideas which justifies an anti-foreign doctrine. On the contrary, as we have seen, the United States has always had an interest in the development of the principle of liberty, an interest which is founded upon the conception of the dignity and worth of the individual, no matter of what nationality. This conception is thus cosmopolitan in nature, and the interest in the establishment of representative government, which follows from it, must inevitably lead to a policy of international cooperation, for it is only this policy which will remove the sores upon which dictatorship feeds.

What we have not sufficiently realized in this country is that a policy of economic exclusiveness must fundamentally be inspired by an implicit belief in our own cultural superiority. And I wish to conclude my remarks this evening by demonstrating that such a spirit is fatal to real national development. If you look at science, art, philosophy, religion, literature, you will find no nationalistic lines. The discoveries of a scientist in England are welcomed in the United States as they are in Germany. The writings of Thomas Mann are read in America just as the writings of Mark Twain are read in England. During the last winter the world has celebrated the fifth centenary of the Dutch philosopher, Spinoza, and the great French essayist, Montaigne. Likewise we have just celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the death of the German composer, Richard Wagner, and

the centenary of the birth of Johannes Brahms. Twenty-one years ago John Morley wrote that "in the glories of our common civilization each nation has its own particular share. . . How disastrous would have been the gap if European history had missed the cosmopolitan radiation of ideas from France; or the poetry, art, science of Italy; or the science, philosophy, music of Germany; or the grave heroic types, the humour, the literary force of Spain; the creation of grand worlds in thought, wisdom, knowledge—the poetic beauty, civil life, humane pity—immortally associated with the part of England in the Western world's illuminated scroll. It is not one tributary, but the cooperation of all, that has fed the waters and guided the currents of the main stream. We may ponder some national trilogies or quartettes. Descartes, Voltaire, Montaigne: Dante, Michelangelo, Galileo: Kant, Goethe, Beethoven: Cervantes, Columbus, Las Casas: Hume, Scott, Adam Smith, Burns: Erasmus, Grotius, Rembrandt: Franklin, Hamilton, Washington, Lincoln: Shakespeare, Newton, Gibbon, Darwin. Choose, vary, amplify the catalogue as we will and as we must, no nation nor nationality counts alone or paramount among the forces that have shaped the world's elect, and shared in diffusing central light and warmth among the children of mankind."

Our Debt to the World as a Whole

You and I may not have read a single line from the world's great philosophers and writers; we may not understand a single scientific discovery; we may not have seen a single great picture, or heard one of the world's great symphonies. Nevertheless, the contributions of the masters of every age and from every nation have made the intellectual world in which we live today. These contributions unconsciously shape our judgments and influence our very thoughts and acts. The intellectual and the artistic basis of life, much more than the economic basis, is truly cosmopolitan in scope. No single nation can develop a culture in a spirit of narrow exclusiveness. Should a nation really attempt such a course, it would soon lapse into decay. It is my firm belief that the United States has already made a contribution to the civilization of the world and that it will continue to do so. But these contributions must be based on the willingness to exchange ideas with other nations whose culture we respect as fully as our own.

It is not my purpose this evening to make a plea for any particular course of action. I have not mentioned the inter-Allied debt, Manchuria, the League of Nations, or the World Court. My one desire has been to help you realize that the fulness of American economic and cultural life, and the perpetuation and development of the ideals which dominated the founding of our republic, depend not upon a policy of isolation, but upon a policy of sympathetic cooperation.

Presidents Washington and Roosevelt Agree

May I conclude these remarks with two quotations from the first and the latest presidents of the United States? Employing the quaint language of his own generation, General Washington declared, in a letter already quoted, "We should consider ourselves as children of a common parent, and be disposed to acts of brotherly kindness toward one another." In his inaugural address last month, President Franklin D. Roosevelt expressed the same sentiment when he declared, with even briefer simplicity, that the United States should follow the "good neighbor" policy. This is a phrase, from which all feeling of moral superiority, nationalistic suspicion, and of economic or cultural isolation is implicitly excluded. It is a phrase which should serve as the spiritual foundation for the re-orientation of American policy toward the remainder of the world.

April 3, 1933.